

December 13, 2004

Dear Parents:

This letter is to update you on several new First Steps procedures that will begin on January 1, 2005. We have redesigned the Individual Family Service Plan Form (IFSP Form). This is the form that is used in the meetings where you and the First Steps providers plan what support you and your child will receive from the program. One reason we're excited about this new IFSP form is that it allows us to get a lot more information from the most important people in your child's life, YOU! This will help our IFSP plans work even better for families.

We will also begin collecting some information that is required for state and federal reports. As you know, we get both federal and state monies to provide early intervention services through the First Steps program. The information we will collect is to help show how much First Steps early intervention helps Kentucky's children. While we have many wonderful success stories from families of how First Steps has helped children in Kentucky, we need data to back it up.

We will collect two types of information that show how effective First Steps is for families. The first kind will come from families at each regularly scheduled IFSP meeting. Your Primary Service Coordinator (PSC) will ask you to review each outcome from the last six months and decide if each outcome is:

1. No longer a need
2. Worse
3. Unchanged, still a need
4. Partially Met; still a need
5. Need Met

The Primary Service Coordinator will have you write what you think in the Family Review Section of the Outcome page(s) and then the PSC will report those numbers to the First Steps data managers.

The second type of information will come from the First Steps professionals who work with your child and family. In evaluations and progress reports there will be a new section that judges how much delay each child has in the five developmental areas: Cognitive, Motor, Communication, Social/Emotional and Adaptive. These are the same areas your child was tested in when you first entered the First Steps Program. If you would like more information about these areas, please let your PSC know. Then the First Steps service provider, who has been working with you and your child will choose the number that best describes the developmental delay in that area of development.

- 0 – No delay
- 1 – mild delay
- 2 – moderate delay
- 3 – severe delay

To decide which number to use, the therapists will use tests, reports from you on how things are going, the changes your child has made in the last six months, and their professional opinion. The Primary Service Coordinator will gather the numbers from the reports and send those to the First Steps data managers.

We want you to know that none of the individual information about your child or family will be reported, all the “number” information from all children enrolled in First Steps will be combined and just total numbers for children will be used in the required federal and state reports, not individual names or numbers. When we can use data to show how much First Steps makes a difference in the lives of children in Kentucky, we can justify the need to continue the program or maybe even expand our services!

As a family of a child with a delay or disability, you receive all kinds of test results and numbers and descriptions of how your child is doing. We will give you the accurate, professional evaluations and assessments – that’s our part. We also believe that the best judge of a child’s progress is that child’s parent. That’s why we want and value your opinion. You know your son or daughter best and what they are doing now that they didn’t do before. So, when you want the whole picture of your child’s progress, consider these parts:

1. Your Family Opinion and Information
2. Professional Judgment of the Service Providers
3. Assessments and Evaluations
4. Scores, Numbers and Labels

If you have any questions about any of the recent changes in First Steps, ask your Primary Service Coordinator to give you the name and phone number of your district’s First Steps Parent Consultant (or refer to the list on the other letter in this mailing). The Parent Consultants in our state are a great resource for information and help to First Steps families.

Sincerely,

Germaine O’Connell
Part C Coordinator, First Steps